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REVIEW
OF THE
CONSTITUTION
OF
GREAT-BRITAIN.

THIRD EDITION,
WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS.
BY JOHN OSWALD.

"Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting."

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ADVERTISING

OF

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE outlines of this Pamphlet appeared first in the month of May 1790, inserted in the **UNIVERSAL PATRIOT**, an English Paper printed at Paris, which the British Ministry were at some pains to suppress. Soon afterwards the Petition of Mr. Horne Tooke to the House of Commons, on the late Westminster election, having awakened the attention of the public, the Managers of Coachmaker's-Hall (a society which, we hope, will soon render in England to the cause of Liberty the same services which it has derived from the Jacobins in France) proposed for debate the following question: "Is the Petition of Mr. Horne Tooke a libel on the House of Commons, or a just statement of public grievances proceeding from the unfair representation of the people?" The Author embraced that opportunity of delivering some observations on the Constitution of Great-Britain. The discourse which he pronounced on that occasion was soon after published.

The

~~The~~ additions now made to this Pamphlet consist for the greater part of passages erased from the manuscript of the first edition, in deference to the opinion of some moderate men of my acquaintance.

The same principle of moderation has still engaged me to suppress several facts and observations strictly true, but which might have too deeply irritated the zealots of the English Constitution. After all, however, I fear I shall not altogether escape the charge of violence; a censure which, in this age of sycophancy and circumlocution, a plain blunt man, who tries to advance in a straight line to the truth, cannot possibly avoid.

REVIEW

R E V I E W
OF THE
CONSTITUTION
OF
G R E A T - B R I T A I N.

TO the praise of a great and good character of ancient times it is recorded, that he led home to the business of human life, and the objects of moral action, the star-gazing studies of the Greeks.

Such praise is due no less to the salutary prudence of the question which forms the basis of the evening's debate; a question which thus wisely conducts us from the glittering track of metaphysical sterility, to the more productive field of home-investigation. *KNOW THYSELF*, is the first precept of wisdom; and to this knowledge of ourselves, to a knowledge of our civil and political situations, a due discussion of the present subject will enable us to arrive. For the question is not simply, Whether an individual, of the name of Horne Tooke, has or has not been aggrieved? but, Whether a great people are fairly represented, and justly governed? or, Whether, on the contrary, abused by the mere phantom of freedom, and gulled by the bombast of a

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certain *constitutional cant*, they have sunk into lethargic security; while their persons and property are subjected to the most unblushing system of speculation that ever usurped the name of Government?

From this enquiry nothing can arise but good. If it shall appear that Mr. Horne Tooke has founded a false alarm, and that the grievances of which he complains are not founded in fact, we shall then have increased the sum of our happiness, by adding to the real safety of our state that pleasing sense of security, which an accurate inspection of the constitutional fabric shall thus confirm in our minds. If, on the other hand, it shall appear that the very pillars of the State are rotten and corrupt, we shall then have discovered the cause of our decay:—to apply the remedy remains with us.

In this Society, I doubt not, the question will undergo that free and candid discussion which its importance certainly demands. Here, at least, we may deliver with impunity our sentiments. Here, I hope, are no fastidious ears to startle at the dictates of truth; here are no selfish interests, no anti-social privileges, no pitiful etiquette to repel the solicitations of humanity and justice. Here we shall not, by threats of fines, of imprisonment, and of pillory, be deterred from exalting the voice of freedom; nor shall the hard gripe of Despotism dare, in this place, to seize us by the throat, and command us to bury in the depth of our bosom the silent sense of our wrongs and our oppression.

I am no orator, Mr. Chairman, nor ever, except upon this question, have I risen in public to deliver my sentiments on any subject whatever; but so closely connected with the dearest interest of my heart

heart, the cause of freedom, do I feel the present object of your debate, that I cannot resist the temptation of hazarding on this occasion a few rude observations. Your indulgence, however, I shall endeavour to merit by the brevity of my discourse, and by a strict adherence to plain common sense, which I take to be the true touchstone of all political institutions, and of every form of government whatsoever.

I come, therefore, bluntly to the question; and I declare, that after perusing with attention the petition of Mr. Horne Tooke, I cannot but consider it as the most direct and daring libel on the House of Commons that ever ventured within the walls of St. Stephen's Chapel: I repeat it, the most direct and daring libel on the House of Commons—for it is the truth itself; and according to the doctrine of our Lawyers, and to the present practice of our Courts, the truer the assertion, the greater is the libel.

Mr. Horne Tooke has the audacity to complain, that parliamentary elections are in general conducted by the most shameful modes of bribery and corruption. And who is there so deeply interested in the profits of the present order of things as to deny the fact, or so damned in political sycophancy as not to confess the justice of this complaint?

Mr. Horne Tooke complains also, that the citizens are prevented by armed force from availing themselves of their rights; and that murders have been committed with impunity, by ruffians hired to impede the freedom of election. And have we not seen the bludgeoned banditti of both factions (for between them both I am willing to divide equally the blame); have we not seen them marshalled under their respective leaders, block up every passage to the hustings, and rush to the com-

bat like two contending armies in the field of battle? The timid, the moderate, and the prudent citizens in general, avoided a scene of violence and uproar; and cursed, from the bottom of their hearts, a brutal anarchy, more oppressive, if possible, than absolute despotism itself. In fine, Mr. Horne Tooke asserts, that the majority of seats in the House of Commons are bought and sold like stalls for cattle at a fair. And is not this a notorious fact, which all the world know as well as Mr. Horne Tooke? but which till now, in the face of that corrupt and all-corrupting assembly, no man, except Mr. Horne Tooke, has yet had the patriotic hardihood to assert. Whatever, therefore, it may be deemed in the selfish sophistry of borough-jobbers, or in the pitiful chicane of legal tyranny in the eye of common sense, in which truth is no libel, the petition of Horne Tooke will not be considered as a libellous attack on the House of Commons, but as a just and true statement of the grievances of the nation, proceeding from the unequal representation, or rather the mock-representation of the people.

I should perhaps make an apology for the naked simplicity of my discourse; but that in the present critical fluctuation of public humours, a torrent of eloquence would not prepare so salutary an effect as a small instillation of simple truth. I shall therefore beg to trespass a little longer on your indulgence, by a few remarks on the representation of this country. And here, Gentlemen, I must request that you will suffer me to deliver my sentiments in plain English, a language perfectly harmless to the ears of our forefathers, however harsh it may grate on the delicate nerve of modern refinement. I could never learn any other manner of speech; and except you give me leave to mention things by their proper names,

names, I hold it better to break off here than hazard your offence by proceeding farther.

Representation pre-supposes election ; for no man can represent another except he has been chosen by him for that purpose. For let us suppose that a man should take upon him to act for a person by whom he had not been chosen ; that he should collect his rents, distribute his revenue, and even levy a tax on the produce of his personal labour, Would you consider him as a lawful agent, or as a thief and a robber, who had invaded under a false pretence the property of another ?

But the representatives of the people are the agents of the public: they manage the common stock ; and this common stock consists of the collective wealth of all the individuals. Every individual, therefore, should have a voice in the appointment of the common agents of all. Nò, say some with an air of triumph, those only should have a right to vote who are men of property. But, pray, Is there any man without property ? Is not the daily labour of the peasant, or the mechanic, as much his property, and as precious to him, as the wide possessions or funded wealth of the landholder, or man of money ? Is not the poor man, whose very existence depends on the wisdom or folly of administration, at least as much interested in the right management of government, as he whose superfluities alone are endangered by its imprudence ? The tax which lessens the luxuries of the son of wealth, and thins a little the crowd of his lacqueys, shall rob the poor man of his morsel of bread, and turn his wife and children naked into the street. But not only is the substance of the poor man perpetually exposed to depredation (and the whole robbery of government will be found to fall ultimately on the the poorer classes of citizens),
but

but he is every moment liable to pay with his blood the price of ministerial mismanagement.— Let us suppose that a weak or a wicked prince (and too many royal monsters have disgraced the throne of these kingdoms) ; let us suppose, I say, that a weak or a wicked King, an ambitious Minister, a rapacious Aristocracy, should think fit (for all or each of these are able) to plunge the nation into war, Where, pray, would they find the victims of their ambition ? Among the rich ? No, certainly ; the rich man redeems his service with a piece of silver. His blood is too precious to be spilt in the quarrels which he foment, and from which he alone can derive the least advantage. The demons of havoc and massacre must rest satisfied with the ransom of viler victims. For the benefit of the rich, the luxurious, and the idle, the sweat of the labouring poor must always ooze from every pore ; but now, to gratify the cruel thirst of ambition, not their sweat only, but their very blood must flow. To inveigle the poor man into the bands of mercenary murderers, every art, every species of fraud is set on foot ; to delude him from his fire-side, from the bosom of his wife and children, the gay phantom of glory is made to dance before his sight. His avarice is roused, his weaknesses are watched, his nakedness is espied, his moments of relaxation are way-laid ; if in the narrow path of his daily duties he should chance to make a single indiscreet step to the right or to the left, he falls into the man-traps of an abominable craft, and is doomed to encrease the number of those unfortunate men who receive a daily starvation of bread and water, to sharpen their souls to that ferocity of wretchedness to which, to butcher a fellow-man, or to fall by his hand, are alike unimportant.

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But the poor man is liable not only to be cheated of his liberty, and tricked into this sanguinary service; but, more atrocious still, he is hunted down like a wild beast; he is torn from his family; he is dragged by ruffians in the broad face of day, in the sight of his countrymen and fellow-citizens; he is dragged like a murderer through the streets; like a sheep doomed for slaughter, he is thrown down the dark dungeon of a floating-jail, amidst a suffocating crowd of unhappy men like himself. If he survives this horrible trial, he is sent aboard one of those royal slaughter-houses of our seamen, a man of war. If, from the danger of war and perils, of the deep also, he chances to escape, as soon as his service can be dispensed with he is sent ashore—to be hanged. He was guilty of theft, you will say: he committed robbery. But what could he do? He found himself thrown adrift upon the wide world, without money, without friends, without resources; and unable to find employment, he was urged by hunger to overleap the iron barriers of property. For his crime (if that to which a dire necessity compels can be called a crime) he made atonement by death: and yet his honest and ingenuous soul would have chosen rather to wither with want than to be guilty of an action that was coupled with disgrace;—but he was driven to despair by a calamity, which human nature is ill able to support. After a long and cheerless journey, he arrived at that humble cot from whence, a few months before, he had been dragged by the cruel hand of power. He approached his humble habitation; but his soul sunk with sad forebodings at a sight that was wont to make his heart leap with joy. He approached his humble habitation; but no fond wife flew to his embrace.—He enters

ters—but, ah me! how fearfully silent is his fire-side! “Where art thou, my love!” he cries, with a faltering voice.—Alas! she was no more!—Torn from her husband, robbed of the stay of her soul, bereaved of the sun-shine of her heart, she bowed her gentle head and sunk into the grave.

In the narrow dwelling of death her sorrows are composed. But first, O woeful sight! she had seen her babe expire upon her breast; she had seen languish upon her bosom the fruit of her chaste love, and wither by the springs of nourishment which nature had provided, but which grief and indigence had dried up.

This is no tale of artificial sorrow, no eloquent fiction of splendid distress, no *delightful vision* made to dance on the horizon of vanity; but a frequent, lamentable fact, which appeals simply to the honest and uncorrupted feelings of the heart. Here are no royal gew-gaws, it is true, to dazzle the understanding, no dagger to glitter through the shining superficies of courtly pamphlets; but yet, to every man that will open the eyes of his understanding, and whose bowels are not inexorably shut, the plain story of humble grief will, I hope, be sufficient to prove how necessary it is to protect, by every possible means, the political weakness of poverty from the insults, the outrages, and the cruel oppression of the powerful and the rich. If there be any class of men that might, with some degree of safety, be left without a voice in the government, it is the opulent; for in all governments not absolutely despotic, the opulent are sufficiently protected by their wealth.

We may, therefore, I think, without presumption, assume it as a principle in a free State:

First, That every man shall be actually represented.

Secondly,

Secondly, That all the Members of the State shall have an *equal* vote in the election of their representatives; for the man that has not a vote, is not represented at all; and if any man is permitted to have more than one vote, then the people are not *fairly* represented.

And now, Where shall we find the representatives of the people of England? In Parliament, no doubt. But the Parliament consists of three powers; the King, the Lords, and the Commons. Does the King represent the people? The King, I reply, is indeed appointed to enforce the laws, but not deputed to enact them.

Are the people represented by the Lords? No, certainly; for the Lords are not elected by the people. They are the mere creatures of the Crown, and a part of that regal pageanty, to support which the people are so shamefully taxed, and so cruelly curtailed of the comforts, and even of the necessaries of life. The Lords, in short, are a privileged tribe of men totally distinct from the people. A Peer is a sort of political monster, who is born a law-giver, sucks from his nurse's breast the wisdom of legislation, and comes into Parliament to represent—himself. If he represents any body whatever, it must be those Danish, Saxon, or Norman pirates, who, at different periods, invaded this country, pillaged and reduced to slavery the natives; and having acquired a larger share of booty than their brother Buccaneers, became Barons, and trampled with the foot of pride on the neck of the humbled inhabitants. Whether our most Noble Lords, Dukes, Earls, &c. have much reason to boast the honour of representing those vagabond robbers of antiquity, I shall not pretend to decide; C but

but certainly this is the only representation to which they have any reasonable claim.

The absurdity of an hereditary nobility has, from its first institution, been fully demonstrated. Let us now examine, Whether the establishment of any privileged cast of men whatever, can be reconciled to the principles of justice or of freedom? Two things, I think, will be allowed to belong to a man by the most sacred right, his purse, and his opinion. To tax a man without his consent, is to plunder him. But is it not infinitely more tyrannical to forbid the operation of his mind, and to rob him of that right of estimation and discrimination which every man, and even many animals, possess from Nature, and which of all things should be free and spontaneous? Here, however, under the character of a Minister, or with the more august appellation of Monarch, a man comes forward, and putting round the neck of another man a red or blue ribbon, or affixing to his breast some glittering toy:—"Behold!" he exclaims, "a GREAT MAN! But let not your saucy thoughts dare to estimate the work of my hands; let it suffice to tell you, here is a great man! approach him like some terrible animal, with much round-about reverence; address him in terms of circumlocution, fearfully circumspect; call him your Lord, even if he should be the lowest lacquey in my presence; and salute him by the title of his Grace, his Highness, his Excellency, were he the veriest dunce, or the most abandoned wretch in my dominions!" What a barbarous refinement of tyranny is this! But you are not bound, it will be said, you are not bound to any thing more than the mere exterior symbols of respect; your inward sentiments may breathe the most profound contempt, at the very moment

moment that your outward deportment bespeaks the most profound veneration. This, indeed, is the privilege of a slave, to curse in his heart the hand which he kisses with ostentatious respect. But is it then a small grievance to be compelled to act the hypocrite, to counterfeit esteem, and to make one's lips and gestures give the lie to his conscience? Thus it is that we impose upon our necks the yoke of dissimulation.—Hence the defilement of the public manners; hence the perpetual interchange of sycophancy, which perverts the social converse of men; hence that leaven of duplicity, which impoisons the common intercourse of life, and which renders our language a lie, our lives a labyrinth of deceit. Thus we find the establishment of a privileged cast of men incompatible, not only with freedom, but with good morals.

But, fondly and childishly attached to the glare of distinctions, to the splendid baubles of nobility, some people perhaps will say, we acknowledge the absurdity of lavishing titles at the caprice of an individual: But cannot you let us have a virtuous Noblesse, created by the voice of the people? No, certainly; and for this obvious reason, that the voice of the people cannot give permanency to the characters of men. The citizen who yesterday saved the Capital, and rescued from Barbarian bondage his native land, may to-morrow conspire against his country, and sully his civic crown in the pestiferous tabernacles of treason.

Besides, nothing tends more to corrupt the mind than titles of honour; nothing is so apt to overset the frail bark of human understanding. Call a man *honourable*, and he will conceive himself privi-

leged to buy and sell his fellow-creatures, like sheep or oxen at a fair : salute him, " My Lord," he will look down upon you with contempt : address him, " Your Highness," he will imagine that you were made merely to maintain his hounds and his w—res ; but if you approach him with the appellation of Majesty,—down upon your bended knees and supplicate his mercy ; for with nothing less than mountains of treasure and rivers of blood will Monster Royalty be appeased !

Thus it is necessary, for the good of society, that the estimation of every individual should ever depend upon the continued testimony of his life, and the probation of his fellow-citizens. The approbation of his fellow-citizens will convey to his heart a felicity, which the smiles of Princes never could bestow, and raise his soul to a height which the minions of Monarchs never could attain ; at his demise the gratitude of the people will place the patriot among the gods.

In short, in a State really free, a privileged cast of men cannot possibly exist ; for it could never enter into the minds of free people to establish so absurd a barrier between man and man. In a free State, there can be but one class of men, which is that of the citizen ; as there is but one will, which is that of the people. No sooner was the French nation fairly represented, than the order of the Noblesse was abolished ; and whenever the people of this country shall obtain an equal representation, our Barons must also bid adieu to their political existence. And surely in the real blessing of equality, and in the manly spirit of independence, they will find an ample compensation for those Gothic badges of Barbarian insolence, and for that vain ostentation of

of courtly bondage, which degrades, while it renders them at the same time an object of merited malevolence.

Since it clearly appears that the people are not represented either by the King or by the House of Lords, let us next examine, Whether or not they are represented by the House of Commons? In the first place, then, the House of Commons are chosen by a number of Electors, not exceeding, at a very extravagant calculation, an hundredth part of the people of Great-Britain. At best, therefore, the House of Commons can represent *only* an Aristocracy, consisting of an hundreth part of the people.

But even this domineering Aristocracy are not fairly represented by the House of Commons; for, so unequally is the representation distributed, that in some places half a dozen individuals have the privilege of sending two Members to Parliament; while in other places, this privilege is diluted among 50 or 100,000 Electors. From this farcical mode of election, it is easy to conceive by what means the whole representation of this country has fallen into the hands of a few great families; and that seats in the House of Commons, as Mr. Horne Tooke observes, are bought and sold like stalls for cattle at a fair.

"Yes," says Mr. Burke, "but the very inequality of representation, which is so foolishly complained of, is, perhaps, the very thing that prevents us from thinking or acting as Members for districts. Cornwall elects as many Members as all Scotland. But is Cornwall better taken care of than Scotland?"

The meaning of this subtle argument, if it has any meaning at all, amounts to this: that the Members of Parliament, not being elected by the
districts

districts from which they are sent, but by a small number of individuals, do not consequently represent one district more than another;—a very fair inference, certainly, but which ought to have been carried a little farther: since, for the same reason, we may with equal logic conclude, that neither do they represent one country more than another; England, more than France; nor the natives of Great-Britain, more than the negroes of Madagascar.

But even this phantom of election is rendered still more illusive, by the limitations prescribed to the choice of the small portion of those who have in this country the right of voting:—I mean, the regulation of Parliament, which narrows the choice of the electors to a certain circle of the Aristocracy, consisting of men possessed of at least three hundred pounds *per annum* (though, in fact, to obtain admission into that Assembly, an income much more considerable is required). Now, to say nothing of the scandalous immorality of this regulation, which degrades and stigmatizes a state of poverty, almost always the portion of liberal and of honest minds; for that to hoard up wealth, and to retain, at the same time, the fund of probity undiminished, is a thing impossible, I will not say; but to the experience, and to the conscience of this Assembly I appeal, whether it be not a thing extremely difficult indeed *!—But not, I say, to insist on the scandalous immorality of a regulation, which stigmatizes an honourable state of poverty, and

* For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.

St. Luke, C. xviii, V. 25.

which

which, by holding up to our view wealth as the criterion of worth, debauches the people, and impoisons the public mind with a false opinion of the excellence of riches ; an opinion that is the cause of almost all the disorders that disturb the peace of society : without, I say, insisting at present on that important point, I cannot help remarking, and remarking with indignation, the cruel, the execrable injustice of committing the dearest interests of the people to the hands of those who profit by their misery, and who fatten on their distress. Are the flock to be represented by wolves ? Can the monopolizers of land, the monopolizers of money, the monopolizers of traffic, represent a people that are depressed, and crushed, and even famished by the monopolies of money, of traffic, and of land ?

How can the natives of Nova Zembla be represented by the inhabitants of Arabia, the happy ? or, Can those who bask in the sunshine of fortune, and who recline in the lap of pleasure, represent the children of toil, who shiver in the frigid zone of misery, and who pine in the bleak abodes of want ? When, in order to represent a suffering humanity, the God of heavenly love descended upon earth, “ he became a man of sorrows, and was acquainted with grief ; ” but among us no man is accounted fit to represent the people, except he be lifted above their condition, and a stranger to their distresses. The people must be represented by men who disdain to be numbered with the people ; men who make poverty a perpetual theme of ridicule and reproach ; men who delight in the degradation of the people ; esteeming themselves wretched, if they cannot look round on a legion of lacqueys ; and ruined, except they can roll at ease in their chariots
of

of pride, to dash the dirt in the face of their fellow-men. Hence it is that the representation, as it is called, of this country is engrossed by those devourers of the people ; who, adding farm to farm, inheritance to inheritance, and monopoly to monopoly, have deprived their brethren of the common birth-right of Nature ; and reduced their equals to a condition little better than the lot of the domestic brutes, that sink beneath the unjust burthens of avarice, and smart incessantly to the cruel stripes of drunken arrogance. They have divided the earth among them, as if it were the patrimony of a few individuals, and not the common inheritance of the human race. Defrauded, even before their birth, of their share of the genial gifts of Nature, entire generations rise and sink again into the earth, without having proved a single joy, or tasted, in their cheerless journey through life, other beverage than the bitter potion of toil, and pain, and disappointment.

Methinks I see—and my soul is moved with compassion at the sight—I see the human race rolling down the tide of ages, and passing in quick succession to the gaol of mortality. Their meagre looks are marked with anxiety and care ; no beam of hope illumines their hollow eyes ; their limbs, lean and distorted with excessive toil, are stained with the fordidness of want.—In the midst, and high raised above the rest, ride a revel rout, fat and sleek, and shining with good cheer : on every side they throw their harpy hands ; they seize the substance of the poor ; they get drunk with his blood ; they pamper their very dogs with the flesh of the needy ; they tread down the weak, like stubble under their horses' hoofs ; they pass on with the noise of much mirth ; they answer
with

with mockery the lamentation of the oppressed; to the moving complaints of the poor they reply, with cruel derision, and say :—" The people must respect that property of which they cannot partake. They must labour to obtain what by labour they can obtain; and when they find, as they commonly do, the success disproportioned to their endeavour, they must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice *."

O, cruel and inhuman decree! the great mass of mankind must pine in perpetual indigence, in order that the unfeeling few may wallow in wealth! They must pine, but they must not mourn over their miseries. They must endure with patience the hard heaping-up of distress; but they must not stir a finger to ease the burthen that bows them down to the earth. And this shall be their only consolation, that, in some future state of things, their oppressors shall suffer tenfold the pains which now they inflict. And, indeed, if mortal eye could dive into the deep mists of futurity; if to mortal ear the voice of the world to come could ascend; if the spectres of horror were visible to our view; if we could hear the dread warning of the bottomless abyss; if we saw the tyrant stretched upon the wheel, and heard the shrieks of the sycophant who had perverted the gift of eloquence to justify oppression, and to extinguish the light of liberty in the soul (and surely, if mortal guilt can merit immortality of pain, this and no other must be the crime); then, indeed, we should have an example that would cause the oppressor to shrink from his murderous meditation, a lesson that would deter from purposed wrong the sons of violence; the lords of the

* Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution.

earth would learn justice, and reverence the will of God *. But far, alas ! from human ken, are removed the decrees of Fate ! On the dubious and fluctuating contemplation of futurity, the thick clouds of darkness roll impervious to the feeble ray of human reason. The timid and conscientious multitude discern, amid the deep mist of uncertainty, forms of fear, and menacing ministers of wrath : but, drunk with the beverage of prosperity, the oppressors of the poor say to themselves, It is the tale of ignorance, the crude exhalation of a dream, which the first beam of the morning will dissipate ; which the dawn of reason chafes from the mind !

But I return, Mr. Chairman, from this digression, which, I hope, this Assembly will pardon, and which, I doubt not, they participate with me against those cruel and slavish doctrines which a certain Don Quixote of despotism has lately dared to vindicate to the world. I return to the representation of Great-Britain.

If the clamours of the slaves in the West-Indies (who are, as we are told by the advocates of that trade, *almost* as wretched as the labouring poor of England) should compel the English government to impart to them also the blessings of the British Constitution, and the negro-drivers should accordingly receive the privilege of electing from the colonial planters a certain number of deputies to represent the negroes, In what manner do we suppose would this contribute to better the condition of the slaves ? And is not this precisely the state of representation in Great-Britain, where the rich, or

* " *Discite justitiam moniti, nec temnere divos.*"

VIRGIL.

the

the dependents of the rich, elect from a class of men still richer than themselves the representatives of the poor? But why should we consume time in talking of the representation of the people, which, as we are informed by Mr. Burke, is not even an object of the English Constitution. "The perpetuation of property in our families, says he, is the most valuable and interesting circumstance attending it (representation); that which demonstrates most of a benevolent disposition in its owners, and that which tends most to the perpetuation of society itself. The possessors of family-wealth, and of the distinction which attends hereditary possession (as most concerned in it), are the natural securities for this transmission. With us the House of Peers is formed upon this principle: It is wholly composed of hereditary property and hereditary distinction; and made therefore the third of the legislature; and in the last event, the sole judge of all property in all its sub-divisions. The House of Commons, too, though not necessarily, yet in fact is always so in the far greater part."

We readily agree with Mr. Burke, that to represent the people could never be the scope or object of the Houses of Lords and Commons; who are, as he observes, "wholly, or in the far greater part, composed of hereditary property and hereditary distinction." But we cannot possibly conceive what he means, when he tells us, that the perpetuation and accumulation of property, "great masses of property;" that is to say, the depriving a great many of their little all, in order to heap up an enormous fortune for a few, can indicate a benevolent disposition? nor how the perpetuation of society can be promoted, by subtracting from our feet the very base of population, the land itself?

These are sublime flights indeed, and far beyond the reach of common sense. It must, however, be confessed, that the Houses of Lords and Commons have never lost sight of the main end of their institution, the accumulation and perpetuation of property, "great masses of property". Of this laudable attention to the grand interest of monopoly, several very curious examples might be given from the annals of England for the last thirty or forty years past. I shall produce two late instances that came under my own observation. The first is, the enclosure of the commons. I happened to be present, in the House of Commons, when a bill of that nature was brought into the House. Having left England at a very early age, and being engaged in a life too active to permit political enquiries, I had, like other young men, taken it for granted that the British Constitution was the very model of legislative wisdom. I therefore listened with much pleasure to the decorous preamble of the bill, which professed to have for its sole object the improvement of agriculture; and I imagined to myself, that the House of Commons were going to divide the common lands among the poor. But what was my astonishment and my indignation, when, by the after-clauses of the bill, I found that the poor and indigent were to be driven from the commons; and that the land which before was common to all, was now to become the exclusive property of the rich! —The honourable House of Commons vanished from my sight; and I saw in its stead a den of thieves, plotting in their midnight conspiracies the murder of the innocent, and the ruin of the fatherless and the widow!

The next instance I have to mention, is a bill entitled, if I rightly recollect, "For the better
Protection

Protection of Nurseries." The Gentlemen, having great masses of property, found that their immense possessions were not enough protected against the pilfering rogues, whom the deprivation of all property had compelled to make free with the property of others ; and concluding, that simple transportation did not sufficiently expiate the horrid crime of cutting a cabbage for the sustenance, perhaps, of a starving family, the honourable Members ordained the common penalty for all offences against the "great masses of property," that of being hanged, like a dog, by the neck.

This decree passed with the most ruffian-like unanimity, if we make one honourable exception in favour of Sir James Johnstone, who rose up, with the feelings of a man, to protest against a cruel addition to laws of which the sanguinary rigour seemed to be levelled solely against the poor and the oppressed. My sensations on this occasion I will not attempt to describe ; but as I retired, I could not help eyeing wishfully the lamp-irons which a provident architect has planted thick about the dark inlets of the House.

I had forgot to mention, that in the course of the short debate that took place on this subject, it appeared that the greater part of the vegetables hawked about town in carts and hurdles was purloined from the "great masses of property" in the environs of the city ; a circumstance of which the upright advocates of the pendulous system did not fail to take advantage. At the same time, however, appeared another circumstance, of which no notice whatever was taken ; which was, that such was the monopoly of garden-ground about the city, that, but for this trade of pilfering, the poor of the capital could scarcely ever afford to
correct,

correct, by a little vegetable juice, their cadaverous diet. Hence it is, that although the possessors of "great masses of property" condemn to death those petty depredators, the people, dispoiled of all property, seldom fail to regard them as the heroes and the martyrs of liberty, the unfortunate champions of the indefeasible rights of man. Their progress to the place of execution is pursued by admiring multitudes; many a fair eye approves the manly limbs of the youth, and weeps their untimely fate; the bold, the subtle actions of their life; their intrepidity in the hour of death become the theme of strains that command applause, and provoke imitation. Thus it is that a government, oppressive and unjust, overturns the very foundation of morality, and confounds in the minds of the people the first notions of right and wrong.

"But it is necessary," says Mr. Burke, "to defend 'the great masses of property,' which are the principal object of representation in the Parliament of England. But what if we should prove that, so far from representing property, the Parliament of England have overturned all property. — What is property? Property is something which a man makes his (*proprium*), by communicating to it the sweat of his brow, or the forms of his genius; it is something that *belongs* to a man, that is, lies alongside of him, or is somehow or other attached to him: and this, in all languages, is the natural sense, and the true etymology of the word property. According to this definition, the monopolists 'of great masses of property,' who also arrogate to themselves the exclusive monopoly of making laws, are men of no property whatever.

"They neither plow nor sow, and yet they reap

"The fat of all the land, and suck the poor." —

The

The poor, who are the true proprietors, the oppressed poor, who communicate to matter the sweat of their brow, and the forms of their genius; without which matter is not peculiar to any, but common to all.

I come now to another observation of Mr. Burke's: "Nothing," says he, "is a due and adequate representation of a state, that does not represent its abilities as well as its property." Where then shall we look for this representation of ability? In the House of Lords? O! crime against decorum! What occasion has a Lord for ability? Is he not born a Legislator? In the House of Commons? But what need has a man for abilities who gives a fair price for his place, or receives it as an appendix to his estate? It is true, there are about half a dozen great orators in the House of Commons; and if a man were to form an estimate of their abilities from the sycophancy of English prints, he would be apt to imagine that, like certain Barbarians, said to swallow the brains of those whom they plunder and assassinate, they had encreased their understanding to a most gigantic size at the expence of a people brutified and degraded. On a nearer inspection, however, we discover them to be mere men of wind, the pliant mouth-pieces of a minister, on one hand; and on the other, the docile organs of a powerful conspiracy of men possessing "great masses of property."

I shall now prove, by a definitive and conclusive argument, that the House of Commons never did, nor ever can, represent the people. The House of Commons form only one-third part of the Legislature; but whenever the people are fairly represented, they will not form one-third part only, but the whole of the Legislature; for the will of a free people is
the

the law. This is an argument equal in certainty to the mathematical demonstration, that a part is not so great as the whole.

Hence, then, it is evident,

1st. That the House of Commons do not represent the people.

2dly. That they do not represent property, since they consist of the enemies of all property, the monopolists.

3dly. Neither do they represent ability; for abilities are no title of admission to the character of Legislator. With a pittance of intellect scarcely sufficient to distinguish him from the mule on which he rides, a man may enter into the House of Commons; but he cannot arrive there without a qualification of three hundred pounds per annum.—Those generous souls, whom the love of mental wealth sublimed above the sordid search of ore, are excluded from any share in that for which they are most fit, the management of government; while from the filth of every dirty speculation, the grovelling sons of gain can crawl with ease into the House. The business of making laws is committed to bullock-contractors, slave-merchants, gamblers, brokers, money-changers; and hence it is, that every barbarous prejudice and ferocious usurpation are defended in that House with the most unfeeling tenacity; while with ridicule and scorn the dictates of mercy, reason, and common-sense, are constantly repulsed. Saviour of the world! When wilt thou arise? When shall the PEOPLE expel, with a scourge, that impure herd of buyers and sellers, who have converted into a den of thieves, the sanctuary of the law?

Having

Having proved that the people are not represented by the King, nor the House of Commons, nor by the Lords, it follows of course that they are not represented at all. Some election-monger, perhaps, will reply, that though the King, the Lords, and Commons, do not separately represent the people, yet that joined together in Parliament, they are the Representatives of the people. In answer to this, it will be quite sufficient to produce this fact, that in Great-Britain, consisting of eight millions of inhabitants, 6087 persons elect a majority of the House of Commons; or, in other words, eight millions of inhabitants are every seven years brought to market and sold, like cattle at a fair, by 6087 individuals *!

Perhaps the parliamentary sophist will still urge, that although the people be not *really* represented in Parliament, yet they are *virtually* represented there. And what means this cant phrase of virtual representation? It is that sort of representation, we shall be told, by which Adam represented the human race. And as the event proved, a very *damnable* mode of representation it was.

But we appeal, say the borough-jobbers, we appeal to the virtual effects of this representation; effects as salutary as the most equal representation could possibly produce. And what are the effects of this virtual representation?—A venal Parliament, a corrupt Aristocracy, an oppressed People. But corruption, they reply, is an essential ingredient of good government, and the accumulation of taxes a *stimulus* to public industry. According to this mode of reasoning, disease is better than health

* This is clearly made out in the Political Disquisitions, Vol. I. B. ii, C. 4.; a work full of important and useful instruction.

vice better than virtue, and slavery superior to freedom. But if to increase the necessity of labour, and to render mankind the mere drudges of the State, be the grand purpose of Government, Why do they not introduce among us that effectual *stimulus* to industry ; I mean the scourge which they have dared to sanction against the backs of our fellow-creatures in another quarter of the globe ? Why do they not, by one bold blow, add to the grand monopoly of the rich the little remains of landed property which the people are still permitted to possess ? Why do they not at once deprive us of that slender portion which the progressive inroads of taxation have not wrested from our hands ? They have reduced us to the hard condition of daily labourers ; they have imposed upon our necks the cruel necessity of eternal toil ; they have even forced us to the contumelious condition of caterers for their vices ; from the very dunghill of their infamy, have they compelled us to dig the means of our subsistence. They have made us a people of pedlars, of taylors, of weavers, of barbers, of brokers, of lacqueys, of gamblers, of man-milliners ; and, if ought can derogate still more from the dignity of man, they have even poisoned the solace of human life, and polluted, by their imperious lusts, the source of domestic consolation ; they have debauched the female mind, and poured forth on our streets a flood of prostitution. Would to God that, by depriving us of every species of free-will, they would relieve us from the ignominy of a seeming consent to such enormities ; that, reducing us to the mere automaton state of slavery, they would save us from the soul-sinking shame of being in any respect accessory to things which, either to act or to suffer, are alike disgraceful to human nature !—But no ; they are two well convinced

convinced how much this phantom of freedom favours the purposes of speculation; and they know that under the disguise of liberty, they have dared to carry their oppression farther than ever downright despotism would have ventured to proceed *. I defy any person to produce, from the most despotic States, an instance of a nation labouring under such accumulated taxes and consequent distress, as that which presses upon the people of Great-Britain. One-half of the measure of our grievances was found sufficient to overthrow the fabric of French tyranny; one-half of the misery under which we groan would raise, in the most absolute governments of Asia, a cry of "Vengeance!" which would hurl the tyrant from his throne.

I have travelled over a large portion of the empire of Turkey, one of the most despotic countries in the world; and the relative situation of the people of Turkey and that of England appears to me to stand nearly as follows:—In Turkey, I found that a peasant or labouring mechanic, by three or four days moderate labour in the week, could maintain two, and sometimes three or four, wives, and a numerous family of children.—In England, on the contrary, the peasant or mechanic is often deterred from marriage by the difficulty of obtaining bread; and should he venture upon a wife, he finds that

* This is a fact which several of the Members of Parliament have not scrupled to confess. On a late debate in the House of Commons, on the Russian war,

"Sir James St. Clair Erskine was sorry to observe, that the House of Commons was become a mere engine in the hands of the Minister, for the purpose of extorting the money from the people under the shew and phantom of freedom, and for oppressing the people with taxes; which, were he possessed of absolute power, he would not dare to impose."

GAZETTEER, 16th April.

six days incessant labour scarcely enable him to support his family through the week.

In Turkey, the great body of the people participate largely in all the natural productions of the country. In England, on the contrary, the peasant or labouring mechanic is seldom permitted to indulge in the comforts of his climate, procured as they are by the labour of his hands : a few articles of absolute necessity compose his coarse and scanty fare ; butter (especially since the poor have been legally robbed of the right of common) very rarely forms a part of his food, except, perhaps, that unwholesome and unpalatable species of butter which salt arrests in a certain state of putrefaction : cheese, except of the driest and most insipid sort, seldom enters his lips ; and with a kind of corrupt water, called small beer, instead of the natural beverage of milk, he is forced to feed his unfortunate progeny. In Turkey, a man may be poor with impunity : a moderate man may sit down unmolested, in the philosophic enjoyments of temperance and leisure, made grateful by the healthful interchange of toil without fatigue. But in England, where the poor are persecuted as much as they are despised, relaxation from labour is a blessing which they never can enjoy. In such a country as this, it would be in vain for a man to say, “ Far removed from the paths of ambition are my desires ; I am satisfied with the simple produce of my field. Why, then, should I toil for ever ? ” “ But you must labour for me ! ” cries his Grace the Archbishop.—“ And for me ! ” cries the Exciseman.—“ And for me ! ” says the Custom-house-officer.—“ And for me—and for me—and for me ! ” exclaim a crowd of Court Parasites, and Royal Mermidons ; so that after submitting to their claims, and satisfying the demands

demands of the landed pensioner, the poor man finds that, of six days incessant toil, nothing remains to himself and his unhappy family but a little black bread to moisten with their tears. Well may he say, in the words of a sacred writer, "That which the palmer-worm hath left, hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten."

If to those manifold evils we add a plague more destructive still than all the visitations of divine wrath that fell upon the land of Pharoah; I mean those harpy hordes of lawyers who infest every corner of the land, and impoison with anxiety and care every action of our lives. If we consider, I say, the poor man fleeced by the courtier, decimated by the priest, fled alive by the lawyer, and hunted down by all the hounds of taxation, can we wonder that, reduced to chuse between the workhouse and the gibbet, he should often, even an ignominious exit, prefer to the monkish monotony of that cold receptacle of indigence; where, cut off from the consolation of his kindred, and severed from every solace of life, he is obliged to swallow with bitterness of soul the unwilling alms of his impoverished fellow-citizens; and, under the harsh controul of a master, drags along, by the irksome rules of methodized wretchedness, a loathsome, useless, vilified existence?

Sometimes, like the suicide African, the poor persecuted wretch lets loose his free-born soul, and rejoices to give his unfeeling oppressors the slip in the middle-passage of his misery.—Happier, then, Oh! far more happy, than when the keen sense of his wrongs ferments in his brain, stings him to madness, and degrades him below the brute.

These

These are not, as ignorance and affectation pretend; these are not the sad effects of a gloomy clime. For to what country has Nature been more prodigal of her blessings? And where, O my native land! does the laughing plain unfold so rich an harvest? And where do hills so green lift their gay tops amid clouds so drunk with the sun?—But a cruel system of rapine intercepts the blessings which Nature showers upon the soil; and a vile conspiracy of public robbers have so tamed and subdued the spirit of the natives, “that every rascally collector of taxes extorts, without fear, from every man that which should be the nourishment of his family *.”

What, then, is the reason that the balance of enjoyment should preponderate so much in the scale of despotism? The reason is plainly this: In Turkey, the arm of despotism bears hard upon the rich; in England, the whole weight of aristocracy falls heavy on the poor. Does the Pascha of a province stand in need of money? He sends for a dozen of opulent infidel merchants, Christians or Jews, whom he sponges without ceremony; and then returns them to the tide of traffic, to imbibe fresh wealth, and to fatten for another squeeze. This is certainly an act of oppression, but very limited, however, in its operation; and by which the great mass of public felicity is very little diminished. In England, on the contrary, where an aristocracy of wealth prevails over all, the few rich flourish, it is true, and riot in every possible enjoyment; but the great mass of the people are cruelly harrassed and oppressed. In Turkey, the Tyger Despotism springs upon his single victim, and gluts himself with carnage; but in England, the monster Aristocracy, extending over the devoted million her ten thousand fangs, sucks

* Sydney on Government. PART II.

from every pore of the people a never-ceasing stream of blood. In Turkey, the measure of sufferance is determined by the common sense and common feelings of mankind: particular acts of state-oppression are permitted to pass with impunity; but the moment that the tyrant begins to lay a heavy hand upon the *many*, the Mussulmans run instantly to arms; and the despot, if not deprived of life, is at least driven from his government. But in England, the nation appear to have lost every natural criterion of right and wrong: they cannot tell whether they are oppressed or not, without consulting certain musty records, which form the basis of what they call their Constitution; a thing which nobody understands, and which serves only to afford their politicians a subject of eternal wrangling, and their Ministers an opportunity of plundering the people without risque.

We will admit, say the borough-mongers, that some abuses have crept into the government of this country. But then we contend that the Constitution of England, in its purity, is established on the most perfect principles of freedom. Vain and fallacious supposition! which deludes the multitude, and has impeded, more than any other cause, the progress of liberty in Great-Britain. On what is your boasted Constitution established? On the *Magna Charta*, and the *Petition of the Bill of Rights*. Is then the whole fabric of English freedom founded on a piece of parchment, which your barbarian Barons forced from the reluctant hand of a feeble tyrant? Have you no better warrant for your liberty, than the gracious pleasure of an alien Prince, who granted your petition, and subscribed your *BILL of RIGHTS*?—Alas! these are puny pretensions to liberty; pretensions by which you can never merit the name of a Free People; an appellation which
hence-

henceforward those only can claim who scorn to ground their constitution on any other basis but the natural and indefeasible RIGHTS of MAN.

I shall be told, perhaps, that although we do not; like the French nation, derive from first principles the maxims of our Constitution, yet the liberty of the subject is admirably protected by positive laws; and then, perhaps, we shall hear a very mysterious story about the miraculous balance of the three Powers, that wonderfully promote the purpose of political harmony, by running counter to each other. In the plain simplicity of my understanding, however, I had imagined that the end of a good government consisted in giving free and unimpeded operation to the *will of the people*; and that whatever tended to obstruct the operation of the public will, must proceed from usurpation and tyranny. But if those boasted checks did really ever operate; if this government of warfare did ever practically exist, the action and re-action of so many complicated springs must at length have worn out the machine; at least, the present Government is conducted on principles as simple as can well be imagined. His Majesty's Prime Minister comes down to the House of Commons, with measures previously concerted in the King's Cabinet: he proposes his Bills; and the House exclaims, What a prodigy of wisdom! He makes his motion; and his motion is carried by a great majority, as virtuous as *unbought*. A similar farce is carried on in the House of Lords; and the will of the Cabinet is proclaimed as the will of the people, who, perhaps, all the while are lifting up their voice against the measure, and execrating its author. This is a thing too notorious to stand in need of illustration.

But, with permission of the sanctioned corporations of politicians, we will now examine with a little

little more attention this gainful object of their worship, the Constitution, composed, as it is, of King, Lords, and Commons.

I am no enemy to the word King; nor do I think it of any consequence, whether the chief magistrate of a State be known by the name of King, Emperor, Dey, Doge, or President. The word King, Kean, Kong, or Kan, was applied in the most ancient times, and in almost every part of the world, to the chiefs of families or tribes; they were, in fact, the patriarchs of an early stage of society.—These are a sort of Kings for whom I entertain a profound veneration. But there is another kind of King, who cannot be considered otherwise than as an animal of the most pernicious nature, and an enemy of the human race. This devourer of the people is thus justly described by the Prophet Samuel:—

“ And he said, this will be the manner of the king that shall rule over you: he will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

“ And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

“ And he will take your daughters to be concubines, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

“ And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

“ And he will take the tenth of your feed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers and to his servants.

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“ And

“ And he will take your men-servants and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

“ He will take the tenth of your sheep ; and ye shall be his servants.

“ And ye shall cry out in that day, because of your king, which ye shall have chosen ; and the Lord will not hear you in that day.”

Now, if such be the hard condition of a people under a King *chosen* by the people, What are we to expect from a King who, as Mr. Burke tells us, should hold his crown *in contempt* of the people ? Would it be surprising that the land were filled with armed mercenaries ; that the produce of the field were eaten up by the locusts of excise ; that the luxurious retainers of a court should forestall the hopes of the husbandman, and devour the bread of the industrious and the poor ? Could we wonder that the places of great honour and trust were filled by sycophants and ideots ; or that the appellation of *most noble, most excellent, most honourable*, were applied to persons engaged in offices of servitude, which a man who had the smallest spark of freedom in his bosom would blush to exercise ? I have heard of a Roman Emperor (his name, I think, was Julian) who, having sent for a barber, was amazed to see enter his apartment a person richly dressed, and with a sword by his side. “ I sent,” said the astonished Emperor (who, suddenly called from the philosophic sobriety of an academic life at Athens to the government of the world, was, as yet, unaccustomed to the magnificence of a court). “ I sent,” said he, “ for a barber to shave me, and not for a Field-marshal to deliberate on the state of the army.” How much would this simple man of an Emperor have been astonished
to

to find, in the most petty Courts of modern Europe, the menial offices of domestic servitude performed by most noble Dukes, Earls, Counts? And how would his generous bosom have burned with indignation, to learn that each of those preposterous ministers of vanity devoured, in the course of a month, more, perhaps, than five hundred honest men could earn in a twelvemonth by the sweat of their brow?

It must certainly give the greatest satisfaction to every lover of his country to learn, that his most gracious Majesty entertains sentiments not inferior in simplicity and benevolence to those of the good Emperor just mentioned. He is said to delight in the story of the frugality of Spartan royalty, and to admire, above all, the Constitution of the United States of America, where the Chief Magistrate is satisfied with a salary of five thousand pounds per annum; and where the whole executive government is conducted at the very moderate annual expence of seventy thousand pounds. His Majesty, I am also informed, rejoices beyond measure in the late glorious Revolution in France, and pants for that happy day when he also shall become, like Louis XVI. the father of a regenerated people! On that glorious day, no doubt, he will thus address his fellow-citizens: "My children! behold a little hoard which I substracted from the prodigality of courtiers and the rapacity of Ministers; behold here are ten or twelve millions, a little rivulet of wealth, which I turned aside from the broad stream of ministerial corruption: not to flow into my coffers (for how could I bear to encrease my store with the blood of an oppressed people!) but to fertilize, at some future day, that regenerated state of things which I foresaw the general corruption would

very shortly produce *. That day, that happy day of renovation is now come!—take therefore this little treasure (which I cherish merely for the good to which it is going to contribute); apply it to the faithful performance of those engagements which we, or rather our forefathers, have contracted for us with the public creditor. Apply it, I say, to the extinction of the national debt;—but let us disclaim, henceforward, the ruinous practice of out-running the public revenues: let us gamble no longer with the lives and fortunes of our fellow-citizens; let us not lay up a fund of calamities for our unfortunate children; let us make no more flourish about the credit of the nation, and the credit of the nation! For what purpose has this credit answered, except to give a band of public robbers an easy access to the purses of the people? In fine, let us not imitate the unjust and unfeeling conduct of our fathers, who, not satisfied with the spendthrift dissipation of their own estates, have left us also in pledge for the sad reckoning of their riots, their drunkenness, their folly!”

“As for you, my Lords; you are, I dare say, ready to imitate my example, not only in making a freewill-offering of your titles (for those are empty

* The dissoluteness of public manners in this country has been urged as an unsurmountable obstacle to reformation: but a contrary inference is much more consonant to the testimony of history, and to the nature of things; for in the moral, as well as in the physical world, corruption is the certain fore-runner of regeneration. The Commonwealth of France has risen, as every body knows, from the very sink of moral depravity; and the Spartans were labouring under all the evils of luxury, and ruined by their own vices, when they committed to Lycurgus the reformation of the State, and agreed to establish their virtue and their freedom on the best of all possible foundations, an equal division of landed property.

(things)

things) on the altar of general good, but also in delivering up to our new Sovereign (the People) those manifold privileges, and that laborious procurement of public affairs, which bows you down, no doubt, with anxiety and care. It would become you well, at the same time, if, at this crisis of difficulty and distress, you restore to the commonweal a portion of those "great masses of property" acquired by means of privileges injurious to the people, or subtracted, not so say purloined, from the common store, and given in return for services that reflect little credit either on your predecessors or on mine."

"My Lords the Bishops, I observe and applaud your holy impatience to spurn from you all those vain decorations of worldly grandeur, and to rid yourselves of those tythes, those pluralities, those luxurious livings, which raise against you the curses of a starving poor; while they stand an insurmountable obstacle in your way, to that eminence of piety to which the rugged path of poverty conducted your apostolic predecessors."

I return from this digression, into which I have been led by the delightful anticipation of future good, to consider another important point of what is called the Constitution of England. This point is the non-responsibility of the Chief Magistrate.

Either the King is possessed of powers necessary to the conduct of Government, or he is not: if the latter, Is it not cruel and unjust to extort from the nation the enormous sum of a million and a-half per annum for the maintenance of a mere pageant, not in the least necessary to the conduct of public affairs? But if he be really possessed of great powers (as most certainly he is), why, in the name of common sense, should the Chief Magistrate, whose

whose errors must, of course, be more pernicious than those of the subordinate officers of the executive power? Why, I say, should he be exempted from that responsibility to which they very justly must submit? The King, you say, can do no wrong. Cannot the King make war? Has he not a power over the throats of the people?—Yes; but the House of Commons hold the purse, and may refuse the supplies.—But what avails the privilege of holding the public purse (were it even held with integrity), if the Minister can at any time commit the honour of the nation? If, by foreign treaties, by intrigues, by cabal, by unprovoked hostilities, he can draw down upon you the vengeance of half the globe, and reduce you to the cruel necessity of defending against half the world your possessions, your independence, and even your existence.

Strange infatuation! a dirty canal cannot, without the concurrence of Parliament, be cut across a few acres of land; but the Minister may open, when he pleases, the veins of the people, and bid the blood of the citizen flow through every quarter of the globe! Should the reason of your Chief Magistrate suffer an eclipse, and the royal maniac should begin to sport a little too roughly with the maids of honour, and to kick the titled lacqueys about his court, it would be thought necessary to put him in a strait jacket. But why, ye deluded nation! are his arms unconfined, when urged by tenfold frenzy, he unfurls the bloody banner of strife, lets loose the hounds of havoc, and whirling furious in his hand the firebrand of war, involves in ruin and desolation half the habitable globe?

Thanks to the glorious Revolution of France! thanks to the enlightened labours of the National Assembly! We may now hope to see the day when
neither

neither the intrigues of a court-parasite, the electioneering interests of a Minister, nor the vile machinations of contractors, brokers, Jews, shall prevail to arm brother against brother, and to render man the greatest enemy of man. The interests of the people (which are every where the same) shall soon cease to be sacrificed to the domineering lusts of a few; and the LAW, which is the voice of the people,—and all other authority is not law, but usurpation and tyranny—the LAW shall establish peace and good-will among men. Such, O thou soul of Benevolence! now united to the eternal source of UNIVERSAL GOOD: such, O PRICE! was the pious end to which were devoted the labours of thy life: such were the heart-cheering hopes that supported thy meek spirit under the cruel calumny of those who hated thee; because they feared the light, and were enemies to the truth!

With respect to the present States of Europe in general, we shall not wander far from the truth, if we regard them not as lawful Governments (For how can the LAW exist where the voice of the people is not heard?), but so many independent associations of robbers.

In order to maintain their respective confederacies, they are under the necessity of establishing at home a species of local equity; but their notions of rectitude have no root in the love of the human race, nor extend beyond the limits of the State. To a certain artificial system of morals they pay a profound respect; but the real and indefeasible rights of humanity they are ever ready to sacrifice to every sordid interest, or ridiculous caparice. The regulations of the banditti must implicitly be obeyed; but the eternal bonds of nature, the tender sympathies of the heart, may be cut asunder with impunity. As far as that mountain they are bound
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in some respect to be merciful and upright; but on the farther side of yonder rivulet they will rob without compunction, and murder without remorse.

And if we enquire into the real cause of all those wars which have so long agitated Europe, and deluged our fields with blood, we shall find them not a whit more respectable in their motives than those bloody contentions which the slave-merchant, with the brandy-bottle in his hand, excites between the drunken chiefs of Africa. In Europe, as in Africa, it is the proud intoxication of royalty, and the cruel avarice of traffic, that plan together those scenes of murder; and in either country the object and end of war is the same—to make slaves.

In a word, the practice of almost every species of government in Europe is perversely opposite to the principle of society. Instead of that sentiment of brotherhood which united mankind from the beginning, and which was taught as the base of morals by Plato, Brimha, Confucius, Jesus Christ, and those other immortal men, whom, in various parts of the earth, and at different ages of the world, the SUPREME WISDOM has raised up for the salvation of the human race; instead, I say, of recognizing that kindly principle of union which nature has infused into our bosoms, we find every where established a system of violence, which, founded on a proud spirit of domination, opposite to justice as to common sense, rises up in a progressive Babel of oppression, till it reaches in royalty the very summit of wickedness, the very pinnacle of insanity. To attain and preserve this *bad pre-eminence*, the most criminal means have been held innocent and just*. Hence then it is that the chief parts.

* Cæsar used often to repeat the sentence which Euripides puts into the mouth of a tyrant: "In other things be just; but if a crown be the object of your ambition, let no crime stand in your way."

parts in the drama of political life have been occupied by the wildest heads and the most atrocious of hearts; and that the world has been thrown into anarchy by those delirious schemes of overbearing ambition, which ferment in the brains of lunacy, and rend with uproar the cells of Bedlam;—to which, when man returns to the sobriety of reason, they will finally be consigned.

I come now to that pretended salvo for all the malversations of government; I mean the responsibility of office. Will the regular corporations of parliamentary politicians permit us to examine in what this responsibility consists, and where it lies? In the first place, it does not lie with the King, for he is not responsible; nor does it lie with the Minister, for the Minister, honest man! is entirely guided by the wisdom of Parliament, and acts under their sanction.—The Lords are not responsible, for they represent themselves; and the Commons are not responsible, for they represent the people;—that is to say, theoretically, or, in other words, by a certain logical fiction, which supposes a fact, and then draws conclusions from that supposition, as if it were really founded on fact. In short, instead of finding responsibility in what is called the English Constitution, I discover a political machine, cunningly contrived to elude responsibility, and to plunder the people with impunity. It recalls to my memory a story which I have somewhere read in the ancient history of Greece. The Athenians, impelled by famine or gluttony, were desirous of tasting the flesh of the bull, an animal consecrated, in the primitive ages of Greece, to the labours of the field, and which seems, in every country, to have escaped long the slaughter to which almost all other creatures had successively been doomed.

The Athenians wished ardently to feast upon the flesh and to drink the blood of *John Bull*; but, like a *wise* and *prudent* people, they desired, at the same time, to avoid the odium of the act, and to feast, if possible, with a quiet conscience. They contrived the business in this manner: they chose a number of virgins (sweet innocent creatures *who could do no wrong*) to bring water to whet the hatchet and the knife. As soon as those weapons were made sharp, one man delivered the axe, another struck the blow, a third cut the bullock's throat. Having *done the deed*, they skinned the animal; and all that were present feasted upon his flesh. After this, they sewed up the skin, stuffing it with straw; and having set it up, put a plow to its tail as if it still were alive, and in act to till the ground. Those who had been guilty of the deed were then called before the tribunal of justice to answer for themselves. The virgins, who brought the water, threw the blame on the persons who whetted the steel; those, in their turn, shifted the responsibility on the man who delivered the hatchet; he impeached the person who struck the blow; and the latter accused the weapon; which, unable to answer for itself, was found guilty of murder, and cast into the sea.

What a wonderful resemblance between the Athenian and British sacrifice of the bull, even to the worming-out his bowels, and setting up a John Bull of straw! There is still another circumstance in which the sacrifice of the real has a striking likeness to that of the metaphorical *John Bull*.—In order that the sacrifice should be deemed good and acceptable to the gods, it was necessary that the animal should advance without reluctance to the altar, and *submit his throat to the knife*. The interpreter

interpreter of those signs of consent was the priest, to whom a fat portion of the sacrifice was set apart. In the same manner, the House of Commons, who *do not* fatten on the blood of the people (and in that the comparison does not hold exactly good); the House of Commons, I say, officiates as priest, and judges by the gesticulation of John Bull, whether he is or is not willing to be bled. It is curious to observe, that the political priest has never yet found that the patient animal shrunk from the operation*.

But to return to the Petition of Mr. Horne Tooke: Have we any reason to hope that it shall induce the House of Commons to redress our grievances, by granting to the people an equal representation? I shall beg leave to answer this question, by relating a story, a mode of delivering, or rather disguising one's sentiments, invented in the days of slavery, and certainly well adapted to the present day; in which it is almost impossible to deliver an opinion on affairs, public or private, without incurring the penalty of imprisonment and the terrors of the pillory. But to come to my story:—An Algerine pirate falling in with an English merchantman, attacked, and, after an obstinate engagement, made her a prize. The unfortunate crew were plundered, carried into a port in Barbary and sold for slaves. They contrived, however, to transmit an account of their captivity to the English Consul at Algiers. This gentleman instantly waited upon the Dey, and in warm and indignant language remonstrated on the insult that,

* You see they consider our House of Commons as “a semblance,”—“a form,”—“a theory,”—“a shadow,”—“a mockery,” perhaps, “a nuisance.”

BURKE'S REFLECTIONS, &c. p. 83.

contrary to the faith of treaty, had been offered to his nation. The Barbarian Prince, reclining on a filken sofa, and inhaling through a long tube the grateful fumes of intoxication, heard with much apathy the Consul's glowing remonstrance. As soon as the Englishman had ceased speaking, the Dey, taking the pipe from his mouth, deliberately replied, "My friend, the Algerines, it is true, are
" great robbers,—AND I AM THEIR CHIEF *!"

Indeed it appears clearly from the Petition itself, that Mr. Horne Tooke had no other object in view (and that certainly was an object of great importance) than to demonstrate to the people the absurdity of similar applications. To speak the truth, a parliamentary reform may serve to amuse, for a time, the people (and no doubt the Ministry will soon find it convenient to play off some such farce upon the public), but can never remedy the defects, nor eradicate the deep-rooted vices of the Government; vices of which those very political corporations are no inconsiderable part. Our evils are beyond the reach of those time-serving expedients; and the enlarged and liberal sentiments of the present age have left far behind that pitiful sort of selfish prudence which governs the conduct of those who have converted Government into a gainful monopoly. Our only hopes of renovation—Shall I dare to give utterance to that which every mind conceives, and to which are turned the desires of every heart?—Our only hopes of renovation are suspended on a NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. There the voice of the poor will be heard against his privileged oppressor; there the language of common-sense will take place of a senseless jargon about pre-

* See Shaw's Travels in Barbary.

rogative,

rogative, privilege, *lex parliamenti*, confidence in Ministers ; there the interest of rotten boroughs and aristocratic corporations will give way to the good of the people ; and, in short, the whole system of sanctioned robbery will vanish before the *Rights of Man*, and the great interests of humanity.

He that does not foresee a grand revolution in the general system of European Governments, must shut his eyes to the evidence of things. On one hand, the public misery ; on the other, the progress of reason and political information press forward an event for which the minds of men are ready and prepared. The late glorious revolution in France holds forth an example which sooner or later will be imitated by every nation in Europe. The struggles for independence in various parts of the globe, the emancipation of America, the fall of the Bastille, are sure indications that the human soul awakes from a long lethargy of herself. Encreased by the streams of philosophy, the public sentiments swell above the narrow bounds which Aristocracy and Priestcraft had prescribed to their course. Woe be to the Minister, and confusion to the Government, that shall dare to oppose the torrent, or withstand the irresistible force of public opinion, in its rapid rise to the grand level of UNIVERSAL REASON, from which, as from the main ocean of the moral world, should flow the fertilizing streams of law, of religion, of civil policy.

“ So long,” says Rousseau, “ as a people yield to invincible necessity, and obey, they do well ; but when they take advantage of their force, and shake off the yoke, they do still better.” The nations of Europe feel their force, and are determined to be free. Let not the Government of England fondly imagine that she alone shall stand unmoved amidst
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the conflict of nations, and the general struggle for independence. The Irish, whom with all the feudal insolence of conquerors she has ever delighted to mortify and oppress; the Scots, betrayed at the union by a vile noblesse, tamed by repeated butcheries into abject submission to the bloody House of H——, and delivered over a traffic for pedlars and a prey to ministerial tools; numerous classes of the English nation, whom her petty policy condemns to political insignificance; all have clubbed together their common hatred, and conspired the ruin of their common oppressor. Already round her grows the storm that shall lay the *rotten fabric* in the dust.

In the accomplishment of the NEW ORDER of things, so devoutly to be wished for, there are two sorts of men against whom it becomes us to stand upon our guard: the first, are the sons of violence, who would advise us to act with precipitation and harshness; the second, are the timid race of men (and who, therefore, assume to themselves the appellation of moderate) who would blunt by the indecision of their character the vigour of our resolves. The latter gentleman will tell you, that things are not sufficiently mature; that the time is not yet come; that the English Constitution is not yet so far gone in corruption as to require a remedy so violent. They confess, that the people are oppressed with taxes; that the freedom of the press is annihilated; that the tyranny of excise has made an alarming progress: but still they will tell your there is great reason to hope that things will alter for the better; and that if Ministers should continue to aggravate the public grievances, the general misery will at last produce that remedy which it would be dangerous to provoke. Such is the language of timidity, and not unfeldom the cant of pretended

pretended moderation in men who derive from the depression and distress of their fellow-men their anti-social privileges and selfish enjoyments. But what would we think of a person who should say to another, It is true, you have been ill used ; your powerful neighbour has broken down your fences, robbed your orchard, corrupted your servants, removed the boundary of your estate,—but yet bear your wrongs with patience : your meek submission will perhaps disarm his injustice ; and at all events it will be time enough to resist when he tweaks you by the nose, kicks you in the breech, and spits in your face. But do not those gentlemen foresee, that the pusillanimous moderation which they prescribe is most likely to produce the very mischiefs which they dread. And ought they not to remember, that a people once vilified have not only rights to vindicate, but affronts to revenge ? Let it be our task to prevent, by a timely reformation, that disgrace which to wash away torrents of blood might flow in vain.

The pressing necessity of such a reformation is on all hands acknowledged. The voice of public misery has been heard, where it seldom has been able to penetrate, in the very midst of the Senate. Several Noble Lords, several Members of the House of Commons, have deigned to deplore the general distress. Lord Lansdown, in particular, has exhibited the following picture, terrifying as it is true, of the universal wretchedness :

“ But what, in the mean time, as had been remarked by a Noble Lord, was becoming of that respectable and valuable class of the community, those gentlemen of small fortunes in the country, who discharged the functions of magistracy and police. By the latest accounts it appeared, that they

they were almost driven from the exercise of hospitality, and were emigrating into town, in order to educate their children, and board as cheaply as possible. Every day it appeared that some house was breaking up. The ancient order of yeomanry, between the farmers and country-gentlemen, was now *completely extinguished*. There was still a body of rich farmers; but these depended entirely on the extent of their capital. The peasantry, it appeared from the report of physicians, in consequence of their reduced living, were falling the victims of putrid distempers *."

Here, then, we perceive, that not only the multitude—(for the sufferings of the *swinish multitude*, as the philanthropic Edmund Burke has dared to stigmatize the people, ought not perhaps to fix our attention for a moment);—we perceive, I say, that not only the multitude are plunged in the most lamentable distress, but also that the deluge of public misery has reached even to those whom a more elevated situation had preserved till now above the level of the general calamity. The gentlemen of small fortunes are forced to fly from their paternal estates, where they can no longer exercise their wonted hospitality; they are forced to fly from the beloved haunts of their youth, and to hide their shame in some obscure corner of the capital. As for the yeomanry, they have vanished from the earth; the ancient glory of England is *completely extinguished*! "For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us †."

* Morning Chronicle, 10th May. † Jeremiah.

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But why should the poor peasant droop with want in the midst of his labours? Why in the midst of plenty should dire famine * seize upon the tiller of the soil? We can dispense with his labours, say the rich; we have found out curious contrivances to perform the offices of husbandry without his aid. Are the poor, then, doomed to perish from the face of the earth? Shall the field support no living thing except the victims of your gluttony †? Shall our cities swarm only with the ministers of your lusts? The land is ours, you reply; we bought it with our money, and we will do with it as we think fit. But when our fathers sold you this land for a piece of silver, Did they sell also the rights of their children for ever? Did they forestal our claims? Did they bind in chains of brass the fate of a people whom as yet the earth had not seen, and who were destined to shoot forth into life long after the fathers of the forest had returned into dust? But did our Sires make no proviso for their posterity? Does the deed by which they gave away their estate contain no salutary clause in our behalf? Is there no day of restoration ‡, no glad day of jubilee declared?

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declared?

* "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn."—Deut. chap. xxiv ver. 4.

† This is literally the case in the north of Scotland, where large tracts of land that formerly supported a hardy happy race of men, are now converted to grazing ground for cattle.

‡ All legislators who have had any claim to the wisdom of that character, have taken care to establish checks against the most grinding of all usurpations, the monopoly of land. The regulations of Moses on that head are worthy that SUPREME WISDOM to which his laws are referred.

"Ye shall not oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the Lord your God.

"The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine: for ye are *strangers* and *sojourners* with me.

"And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.

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declared? Have our forefathers devoured our inheritance? Robbers of posterity! Have they dared to appear at the tribunal of the common Father of us all, with the spoil of their children in their hands? Have they carried with them our appointed portion of enjoyment? Have they sunk depressed into the earth with the anticipated curses of generations unborn; with all the weight of our wretchedness on their heads?—O that we had therefore remained still in the chaos of non-existence!—O that Nature had repressed us in the threshold of life!—O that she had whispered in our ear, “There is no room for you on the earth: a privileged race of men have engrossed to themselves all the comforts of existence; and for you, nothing remains but the tares of disappointment and the thorns of despair!”—And yet tell us, ye Lords of the earth, tell us, since we have no right to the land of our nativity, no claim to the ground on which we tread, tell us why our limbs are naturally as vigorous and as comely as yours? Tell us why our souls can boast an equal portion of heavenly fire? Tell us, in fine, why our faculties and our desires for ever falsify your titles, and give the lie to your parchments?

But the multitude, say they, the *swinish multitude*, say the powerful, have no knowledge; they are

“If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possessions, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.

“And if the man shall have none to redeem it, and he himself be able to redeem it,

“Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold, that he may return unto his possession.

“But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that has bought it, until the year of jubilee: and in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return into his possession.”—Levit. chap. xxv.

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without wisdom ; we have plunged them in the mire ; they will wallow in the filth of their ignorance for ever. It is true, you have corrupted the understanding of the people ; you have interposed between them and the prospect of their rights, the dark clouds of accumulated prejudices ; you have shaved the head of Sampson ; you have put out his eyes, it is true : But why should the keen edge of your mockery drive him to despair ? Are you not afraid, lest, when he hears over his head the mad tumult of your merriment, and reflects on the misery of his lot ; when his sufferings, thus aggravated by wanton insult, he compares with the felicities of your condition, Are you not afraid, I say, lest, in the blindness of his rage, he should lay hold on the boasted *Corinthian Pillars* * of your state, and, by a desperate effort, overwhelm in one dreadful ruin, himself, his oppressors, and all this lofty fabric of your pride ?

To prevent so terrible an event (which the infatuated tyranny of government tends so evidently to produce), it becomes every man to contribute to the utmost of his power to open the eyes of the people, and to lead them to a firm, calm, and manly vindication of their rights. In order to avert every species of violence (so contrary to those principles of freedom which seek to establish a system of government mild as that nature which is the basis of all our rights), it would be prudent in us to take a lesson from the operation of the late revolution in France. In that country, while *force* was on one side, and the *public will* on the other, several acts of violence were committed from the

* Nobility is a graceful ornament to the civil order. It is the Corinthian capital of polished society.

unavoidable opposition of particular interests to the public good. But no sooner had the nation taken arms (and no nation unarmed ever rescued their liberty, or long retained it in their hands); no sooner, I say, had the nation taken arms, and that public force was coupled with public opinion, when instantly all outrage ceased (for all resistance was in vain), and, like the thunder of Omnipotence, the VOICE OF THE PEOPLE commanded reverence and respect from one extremity of France to the other.

Let us not be deceived, for it is force alone that can vindicate the rights of the people. Force is the basis of right, or rather right and force are one. The will of God is right, for his power is almighty; and on the invincible power of the people the rights of man stand upright,

The force of the people consists in that strong sentiment of right which God has implanted in the human heart, or rather it is God himself that acts within us; "for in God we live, and move, and have our being." Hence the will of the people and the will of God are one: *Vox Populi, vox Dei.*

But force is sometimes supplanted by fraud. Of all frauds the the most fatal was the invention of arms. Could we destroy this fraud, force would again establish right; and over the cunning of the few would prevail the might of the many. But since it is no longer possible to plunge into oblivion this pernicious invention, let us use it like those poisons which, taken in copious draughts, are said to defeat the fatal effects of a smaller dose. By the fraud of arming the parts against the whole, the general liberty was overthrown; let us therefore arm the whole to overturn the usurpation of the parts. As
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the age of iron was the last stage in the depravation of man, so neither in our upward progress in the circle of human mutability can we hope to arrive at the age of gold without passing through an age of iron. Let us therefore every man become a man of iron; let us rise up as one man, armed, to vindicate our rights. But let no act of vengeance stain the holy work of regeneration. Let us remember, that the lust of revenge has ruined more than one revolution. In short, from the punishment due to their past mis-deeds, let a general amnesty protect the public robbers; but whoever shall dare to oppose the reformation of abuse, him let the *besom of destruction* sweep from the face of the earth: cursed be the eye that taketh pity on the enemy of the people; and may the tongue wither that shall plead in his behalf.

In the formation of the future Constitution of this Country, it becomes us to avoid that dangerous deviation from sound policy in which the French nation have erred, in assigning to their National Assembly not only the province of discussing and proposing laws, but also the power of enacting them. The suspensive *veto* of the King is not a remedy, but an aggravation of the mischief. Let us, together with the advantages of a fair representation, vindicate to ourselves that actual exercise of the sovereignty, by which the ancient republics of Greece (notwithstanding the great defects of their government) exalted the human character higher than it has risen since their fall. To the *wisdom of the nation*, condensed in the National Assembly, it belongs to deliberate, to discuss, and to propose decrees; but nothing less than the *will of the people* can carry those decrees into LAW. The difficulty of assembling the people

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is at best an absurd objection; for the people can as easily assemble by sections, districts, &c. to give their *sanction* or apply their *veto* to a decree proposed by the National Assembly, as they can to appoint that Assembly itself. It is as easy for the people (and certainly much more important) to affirm or reject a decree, as it is to elect a judge, a bishop, a constable, a king.

But the political writers, and even those the most favourable to the cause of freedom, are of opinion, that a fair representation will answer all the purposes of government. Let us examine with some attention this important question. The law is the will of the people; whatever therefore is not the will of the people is not law. But how then, without appealing to the people, can we know whether or not the decrees of the National Assembly be law, that is to say, whether they be willed by the people? The National Assembly are liable to err from three causes. 1. From fear. 2. From corruption. 3. From ignorance. They are liable to err from fear, inasmuch as they may be awed by the conspiracy of what is called the Executive Power, by a riotous rabble, by a general at the head of his army. They are liable to err from corruption: the gold of foreign powers, the seduction of the civil list, or the weighty bribe of a powerful combination of men of wealth, may turn them aside from the path of their duty. Thirdly, they are liable to err from ignorance: and this operation of ignorance is twofold, either under or above the level of the people. If the decrees of the National Assembly fall beneath the level of the people, in that case the laws will act in an inverse ratio to that which is or ought to be their chief object, the instruction and exaltation of the people. If, on the
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other hand, the decrees of the National Assembly soar much above the degree of instruction at which the nation is arrived, those decrees will become acts of violence and oppression ; they will shock the feelings and the prejudices of the people ; they will cause murmuring, discontent, resistance, insurrection, and introduce anarchy, instead of bringing forth order.

But whether the National Assembly be moved by fear, influenced by corruption, or act from ignorance (and that they should not be obnoxious to one or more of those motives is morally impossible), it is evident that the nation, instead of being governed by the law, will be subjected to decrees that violate the law ; that is to say, the will of the people. Now this is usurpation and tyranny.

To correct (and that men should puzzle their understanding to find out expedients to correct an evil, instead of removing it entirely, is a proof of the timidity with which the human mind advances in every novel discussion) ; to correct, I say, the errors of representation, two principal expedients are proposed ; the right of remonstrance and that of instruction. The right of petition or remonstrance is at best an ambiguous weapon, as often turned against the people as employed in their favour. Besides, a petition can contain the will of individuals only, to which the government are not bound to attend ; and the persons at the head of affairs can always say this is not the voice of the nation.

The right of instruction, that is to say, the right which the constituents have to instruct their deputies, supposes two absurdities. First, it makes decision precede deliberation. Secondly, it involves the absurdity of saying to the deputy chosen, You are wiser than we, therefore deliberate in our stead ;
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but at the same time take with you our instructions, in order that our ignorance and incapacity may guide and controul your abilities and wisdom.

But whether those instructions be absolute or only recommendatory, still they must of necessity cramp the deputy ; for in order to perform well any operation whatever, it is necessary to have absolute and despotic power of exertion as far as regards the object in question. And this absolute power of exertion is necessarily connected with singleness of action ; for if a man have more than one object in view, it is clear that his mind must be divided, and therefore weakened, as to its operation on either object. This truth, still unrecognized in politics, has been long since familiar to our mechanics. The pin-maker, for instance, analyzing the process of making a pin, has found that it consisted of twenty distinct or simple operations, which he has therefore distributed among twenty persons. How much this distribution of labour has contributed to the neatness and dispatch of the work, all the world knows. Now, in the process of making laws (an operation at least as difficult, and certainly more important, than pin-making), there are evidently three principal and distinct operations ; to deliberate, to decide, to execute. Now not only are these distinct operations, but they are functions that belong to organs totally different. To deliberate is the province of the head, the heart decides, and the arm executes. When the head and heart are agreed, the arm performs with alacrity its task ; but when the heart refuses its consent, the arm will not act ; for Nature made the arm to obey the impulse of the heart, and not the suggestions of the head. In like manner, when the heart of the people beats in unison with the counsels of the
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head (the National Assembly), then the executive power, that is to say, the mighty arm of the people, made up of the united arms of all the citizens (and to apply the term executive power to any other modification of power is as absurd as it is dangerous), converts with ease into act the deliberations of the head, flowing warm from the sanction of the heart. But if the heart deny its sanction to the deliberations of the head, the arm cannot without violence be made to execute; and all violence is contrary to government as anarchy is to order.

There is also another reason still more important for assembling the people, which is the necessity of establishing the law upon COMMON SENSE. Now, What else is common sense but the common consent of mankind? Could we assemble in one spot the whole human race, we should then have absolute common sense, the sum total of wisdom, the main ocean of mind; and the roar of the people would speak with omnipotence the will of GOD UNIVERSAL. The greater the mass of the people assembled, the greater will be the portion of COMMON SENSE obtained; the nearer we shall approach the UNIVERSAL GOOD. From this profound source of sentiment it was that the Greeks, in their numerous assemblies, drew by sympathy those wonderful energies; and that, strong in the collected feelings of a great nation, they marked deep the field of battle, impressed the marble, or inscribed the glowing verse with characters of greatness which no lapse of ages shall efface.

But would you see, at one glance, a comparative view of a nation exercising the sovereignty with a people acting by representatives, turn your eyes to where, covering that immense plain, the Greeks assembled in the pure face of the sun, and in the holy presence of heaven and earth,

declare the sovereign will. And now step into this chapel, taking care first to stop your nose, and there you will see shut up sweltering in that apartment four or five hundred senators, who, by the faint light of a lamp, amid the fumes of indigestion, the steam of sweat, and other fetid exhalations, emit from rotten lungs the wholesome laws that are to regulate nine millions of inhabitants!

When those who conducted the Constituent National Assembly told the French that the sovereignty belonged indeed to the people, but that they could not exercise it except by delegation, they uttered not only a cruel mockery, but an impudent lie, or an ignorant untruth. It was downright derision to say that the people had a right which they could not exercise; and it was false to say that they could not exercise that right, since among all the free nations of antiquity the sovereign authority, or right of making laws, was actually exercised by the people.

All that we desire at present, however, is a fair and equal representation. A liberal discussion of the principles of legislation in a National Assembly will produce in a few months, and that too without violence, a redress of those grievances which ages of ignorance and mis-rule have heaped upon our head. Let us always remember, however, that liberty is only another name for equality; and that no nation deserves the appellation of free in which the conditions of men are greatly unequal. In order to restore the people by degrees to that happy state of independence, the National Assembly of France have put in action several means which we also might with success adopt. Of these one of the most important is the abolition of the absurd right of primogeniture, or eldership; an abuse by which we consecrate the crime of Cain, and renew daily the murder of the younger brother. Another
powerful

powerful means, is the division of the commons among the poor ; for above all let us keep in view this eternal truth, that liberty can never endure which is not firmly infixed in the soil ; and that in order to brave the tempest of years, and to flourish through a long period of ages, the plant of freedom must strike deep her root, and spread wide in the bowels of the earth * !

With respect to the system of government to be adopted, it appears to me that the best, and indeed the only good system of government is that which unites in one a pure democracy, a pure aristocracy, and a pure monarchy. To explain this seeming enigma, the government must consist in a pure democracy, inasmuch as the power of the *whole* must be omnipotent over all its *parts* ; for when a *part* has power to controul the *whole*, tyranny and not government must ensue. In the second place, a pure aristocracy must be established (that is to say, an aristocracy in the proper and primitive sense of the word, which signifies *pre-eminence of the best*). But who are the *best* ? Those certainly who are *chosen* by the people ; for who except a man's fellow-citizens can be or ought to be the judges of his *probity* or *wisdom* ? And in what manner is this aristocracy to be chosen ? By assembling the people, and electing, as the Jews did when they chose a king, those who are taller than the rest *by the head* ; for such are the men whom God, Nature, and the fitness of things, have destined to hold the reins of government. In the third place, a pure monarchy is necessary to good government ; or, in other words, it is necessary that

* See on this subject " An Essay on the Right of Property in Land, with Respect to its Foundation in the Law of Nature, its present Establishment by the Municipal Laws of Europe, and the Regulations by which it might be rendered more beneficial to the lower Ranks of Mankind, by Dr. Ogilby, Professor of Humanity in the University of Aberdeen."

one will should reign supreme over all ; for if there existed in the state more than *one will*, contention would ensue : and contention is the enemy of government ; for *government is concord*. In a good government, there can be but *one will* or monarchy, which is *the will of the people* ; for if the will of a *part* could controul the will of the *whole*, the *natural ratio* of things would be inverted, and tyranny would overthrow government. This, in my opinion, is the POLITICAL TRINITY, three modifications of one essence (the people), in which the whole science of government is summed up.

Let us now try, by these *criteria* of good government, the Constitution of Great-Britain. In the first place, we have no democracy ; for the people, as we have already seen, have no power. In the second place, we have no aristocracy, or *pre-eminence of the best* ; for the governors of the nation are *the children of chance*, and not *the choice of the people*. In the third place, the British Constitution is not monarchical ; for the government is committed, not to the *guidance of one will*, but to the *contention of several*. In its best theory, it is the warfare of three wills ; but in substance and fact, IT IS THE CONJURATED TREASON OF THREE PARTS AGAINST THE WILL OF THE WHOLE.

Since, therefore, it is clearly demonstrated that the Constitution, as it is called, of Great-Britain is neither monarchy, aristocracy, nor democracy :—What is it then ? It is OLIGARCHY, OCHLARCHY, TYRANNY, CORRUPTION, ANARCHY.

To this Constitution, therefore, what hinders us from addressing the words of the *inspired* writer :

THOU ART WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE, AND ART FOUND WANTING."

THE END.